

GAO Report Highlights DHS Progress in Advancing Information Sharing

Posted by DHS Under Secretary Caryn Wagner & CIO Richard A. Spires on Thursday, November 1, 2012

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The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has made great strides toward our information sharing vision ? which will ensure our leaders have the ability to access information to prevent harm to U.S. citizens and protect national security. This vision and progress were recently recognized by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) in a report published this September entitled [?Information Sharing: DHS Has Demonstrated Leadership and Progress, but Additional Actions Could Help Sustain and Strengthen Efforts.? \[1\]](#)

The DHS approach to advancing information sharing is grounded in evaluating priority initiatives on four essential criteria: level of cross-departmental impact, linkage to departmental missions, extent to which they enable enterprise-wide information-sharing, and the level of support from components. In addition, we are in the process of implementing customer feedback measures on the usefulness of information provided and have taken steps to assess customers? information needs.

Our leadership?s commitment to governance has been demonstrated through the maturation of the Information Sharing and Safeguarding Governance Board (ISSGB) as a forum to collaborate on key information sharing initiatives and enhance collaboration among DHS components. The GAO report credits the Department for establishing a groundbreaking process that prioritizes key information sharing efforts for additional oversight. DHS was also cited for instituting a mechanism to track progress across these efforts, for maturing our information sharing architecture, and working to assess the extent to which technology programs, systems, and initiatives are furthering the critical information sharing capabilities defined in the architecture.

At DHS, the collaboration between the [Office of Intelligence and Analysis \(I&A\) \[2\]](#) and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) has been instrumental in advancing the policy, process, technology, and culture of information sharing to strengthen the Department?s support to those on the frontlines of protecting the homeland. The two of us have seen first-hand the evolution in the way the Department governs programs, systems, and initiatives to make positive gains in the information sharing mission, as well as core DHS missions that rely on information sharing capabilities. The Department?s components and their willingness to share best practices and engage in the corporate process have been key to the progress to date. We remain committed to working with them to continue to realize the goals in our strategy?which they helped to craft?and to close remaining gaps in the sharing and safeguarding of information.

Of course, our work has only just begun. Moving forward, our challenges include continued identification of information sharing gaps; analyzing root causes of those gaps; and measuring progress in addressing gaps. Additionally, we need to support priority initiatives to strengthen the Department's interoperability with our mission partners, and to leverage the "shared first" strategy to continue to advance the Department's missions and achieve its information sharing vision. We know our future depends on the continuation of I&A and OCIO's strong collaboration, with the ongoing support and engagement of the components.

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